

Sprezzatura
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COMPETITION NUTRITION GUIDE



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INTRODUCTION

Whether its your first tournament or your hundredth, a good nutrition and hydration plan can be the secret weapon that keeps your performance at 100% and prevents dreaded mid-day flagging when it counts most. This handout is designed specifically for competitive fencers who are serious about optimizing their diet to enhance their competition performance and post-event recovery.

Why Nutrition Matters

Fencing demands a unique blend of speed, agility, strategy, and endurance. To excel in this intense and often many-hour activity, your body needs more than just good fencing technique and appropriate conditioning. The foods and drinks you choose can significantly impact your energy levels, focus, and overall performance throughout a single or multi day competition.

In this guide, you'll find essential tips on what to eat and drink to prepare your body and thrive during the demands of competitive HEMA. We'll walk you through optimal nutrition strategies for:

- The Morning of the Competition: Start your day right with balanced meals and snacks that provide sustained energy and prevent mid-afternoon slumps.
- During Competition: Maintain peak performance with smart choices that support endurance through every bout and avoid the late-in-the-day crash and burn.
- Refueling: Aid recovery and replenish your body with the right nutrients to ensure you're ready for the next day's challenge in multi-day events.

SPECIAL TOPICS

In addition to general nutrition guidelines, this booklet also covers:

- **Sports Drinks**: Understand when they are needed and how to vary your fluid choices for optimal hydration and electrolyte balance.
- **Sports Supplements**: Learn about popular supplements like caffeine and creatine, and how they may affect competition day performance.

By understanding and applying the principles outlined in this guide, you'll be well-equipped to perform your best when it matters. Make every bout count!





GENERAL CONCEPTS

5 FUNDAMENTALS OF ATHLETIC NUTRITION

To excel throughout the long days of a HEMA tournament, understanding the fundamentals of sports nutrition and having a plan of attack is crucial. Here are five key concepts to consider as you plan for achieving peak performance at your next competition:



MEAL TIMING

Eat a meal about 3-4 hours before the event to allow time for digestion. This should be substantial but not heavy. Follow up with a snack, such as a banana or energy bar, 30-60 minutes before you fence to top off your energy levels.

PREPARE FOR BATTLE

HYDRATE

Good hydration starts the 24 hours before competition, not after your first bout. Take a water bottle to work or school to encourage fluid intake. The morning of, drink 16-20 ounces of water in the 2-3 hours before fencing to avoid midbout dehydration.

GRAZE

Between long pools or competitions graze on snacks that are easily digested for additional quick energy. Trail mix, fruit, salty chips or a bite of an energy bar are all easy options. For sensitive stomachs, try a full calorie sports drink.

REPLENISH

After competing fuel your body with a combination of complex carbohydrates and protein to restore your glycogen stores and repair muscle tissue breakdown. Continue to drink water afterwards, particularly at multi-day events where there is more the next day.

HIDDEN TRAPS

Competitions are great social events, but don't let your inner party animal get the better of you. Avoid the dehydrating effects of excessive alcohol consumption at evening social events. Set a bedtime in advance to allow ample time for sleep.

DAY-OF BREAKFAST

A well-rounded breakfast is essential for setting the stage for a successful competition day. Eating the right meal 2-3 hours before your fencing event allows your body to digest and convert food into usable energy, ensuring you're ready to perform at your best. Note that this might require an earlier wake-up call than usual for night owls, but it's worth it for the significant performance boost. Below are three satisfying options for busy fencers:



OATMEAL POWER BOWL

Oatmeal topped with banana and peanut butter

Why It Works:

Oatmeal provides slow-digesting carbohydrates for sustained energy, while banana adds vitamins including potassium and magnesium which help prevent muscle cramps. Peanut butter adds healthy fats and protein. Add a 1/2 scoop of protein powder or a dollop of greek yogurt for an additional protein boost.



CEREAL AND YOGURT

Greek yogurt with granola or cereal and berries

Why It Works:

Greek yogurt is a rich source of protein while being inexpensive. Granola adds complex carbohydrates and satisfying crunch. Look for lower sugar, higher fiber cereal and granola options to stay satisfied without the jittery crash. Berries add antioxidants and vitamins as well as burst of sweetness.



AVOCADO EGG TOAST

Whole grain toast, mashed avocado and scrambled egg

Why It Works:

Eggs provide high quality protein and essential amino acids in an easily digestible format. Avocado adds healthy fats to keep you fuller longer as well as fiber. Whole grain toast provides the slower-digesting carbohydrates to keep you going through the morning.

LIGHT BITES

Queasy tummy? Try a liquid calorie breakfast like a fruit and protein smoothie or a store-bought nutrition drink

DURING COMPETITION

HEMA tournaments can span the entire day, so relying solely on breakfast won't sustain your energy levels long enough. Having a nutrition and hydration plan for while the competition is still running is crucial to elite performance and focus. Bring multiple snack options and plan to consume small amounts of food every 2-3 hours while the competition is running. This will keep energy levels stable without overwhelming your digestive system.



QUICK CARBS

Easy to digest, snackable sources of glucose & sodium such as Rice Cakes, Chips, Tortilla Chips, Salted Popcorn, Pita, Whole-Grain Bread, Crackers



ENERGY BARS

Not all bars are equal. Avoid high fiber protein bars (ie Quest Bars) as these will have a dehydrating effect and are not meant for mid-workout. A little sugar here is ok, but check the ingredients and avoid candy bars masquerading as nutritious.



FRUIT

Fruit has multiple benefits - vitamins & antioxidants, high water content, and fiber. Pre-slice your fruit for easier consumption throughout the day.



NUT MIX

Healthy fats and protein in nuts can add satiety. Nuts are a dense source of calories so be mindful if you buy in bulk. Avoid nut mixes with too many candy additives as these have less nutritional value.



LIGHT PROTEIN

When lunch isn't feasible and the day isn't over, add in easy to digest protein sources like cheese sticks, yogurt, or a protein bar to nibble on.

Bonus: Try cheese & crackers or pita & hummus for a great balanced combo

ALL ABOUT SPORTS DRINKS

We sweat a TON in competition - hot gymnasiums, thick jackets, and multiple hours of high intensity activity. Don't let yourself become fatigued due to dehydration and fluid loss.

SPORTS DRINKS

Sports drinks are carbohydrate and electrolyte delivery devices cloaked in a pleasant taste. They can be consumed directly before, during, or after competition. If you are fencing for longer than 60 minutes, you need to be adding a sports drink in to your beverage rotation.

In general, **small sips throughout the day** (every 10-15 min) will provide a greater performance benefit than chugging a bottle in between competitions.

Picky stomach? Test various flavors and brands beforehand to find the one that you can tolerate. Diluting the drink with a little water can also help palatability.

WATER

Water should be your mainstay leading up to the event. How do you know if you're drinking enough? Urine should be clearish, not deep yellow.]

During your competition you should have water available in addition to the sports drink. If you think that's odd to have two beverages, take a look at the sidelines of a professional sporting event and you'll see the same thing!



AMINO ACIDS (AAS)

Amino Acids (AAs) are the building blocks of proteins. Amino supplements are designed to mix in to water or a sports drink and used during intense exercise to reduce muscle breakdown. Interestingly, adding AAs to a sports drink has an additive effect allowing your body to be sustained with fewer carbohydrates. AAs come in many flavors and varieties, so be sure to try it in advance (use it in HEMA practice) to make sure you like the taste before bringing it to competition. AAs can be a great addition for multi-day events.

Hydration can be your key to success or your Achilles heel.

END-OF-DAY REFUELING

Once the final bout is over and the competition day has concluded, it's time to focus on refueling your body to aid recovery and prepare for the next day. A well-balanced meal post-competition is crucial for muscle repair and replenishing the energy stores needed for explosive, quick actions. Although you certainly deserve to reward yourself, keep the following concepts in mind as you enjoy your well-earned night out!



It takes 20 minutes to feel full. Avoid that over-stuffed feeling by pacing yourself. Eat slowly so that your stomach can tell you when its had enough!

VITAMINS AND MINERALS

Electrolytes can also be replenished from food. Some high-electrolyte foods include bananas, avocados, almonds, spinach, sweet potatoes, beans, nuts, and yogurt.

REPLENISH CARBOHYDRATES

Glycogen stores become depleted during the competition day. Choose complex carbohydrates that provide fiber and fullness while also rebuilding your glycogen stores.

PRIORITIZE PROTEIN

Your post-competition meal should include at least 30 grams of protein. Intense physical activity results in microtrauma to muscles which rely on protein to rebuild.

ALL ABOUT SUPPLEMENTS

NITRIC OXIDE BOOSTERS

Citrulline (L-Citrulline Malate) and Beetroot powder are common sources of nitric oxide used in pre-workout or "pump" type supplements. Designed to increase blood flow to and from muscles, they assist in oxygen delivery as well as metabolic waste product removal. These supplements are helpful for high volume, high intensity exercise where every last rep counts, but may be less useful for fencing where activity is interspersed over a period of several hours (or days). Beetroot powder is a naturally occurring source of NO and works slightly longer (4-6 hours). There is some data showing this may be important for older athletes (40+) as the body's ability to produce NO reduces as we age.

CAFFEINE

Caffeine is a common stimulant taken before intense or prolonged exercise. Although relatively safe, each athlete has a different tolerance and response, so knowing the right dose for you is important.

- Onset time: 45 minutes
- Dose: 200-300 mg
- Repetitive use creates resistance
- Too high a dose can result in unwanted negative side effects

Benefits:

- improvements in performance for long events with interspersed high intensity activity (ie fencing)
- possible improvements in hand-eye coordination and accuracy

PREWORKOUT SUPPLEMENTS

What's in that pre-workout powder? Take a look at the label and you'll see a long list of unpronounceable ingredients. Preworkout powders are intended for one thing - helping you lift heavier for a 60-90 minute workout in the gym and feel a "pump up" effect in your muscles during that time. They are not intended for agility or endurance sports where athletes compete for a long time. Although convenient, consider taking only the supplements you truly feel you need.

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LET'S FENCE!



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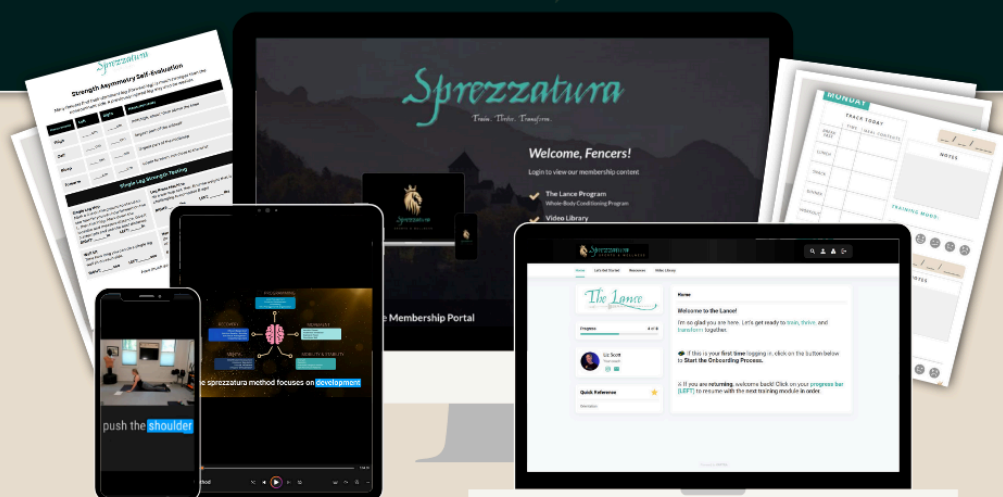
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